

The mechanical reproduction of cultural heritage: shifting from touristic areas to public spaces

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Abstract

This paper puts forward a coherent argument for an alternative approach to urban monuments and archaeological sites as part of a viable model of sustainable tourism growth for mature “conceptually congested” historic destinations. Today’s fenced off tourist sites with paid entrance should become tomorrow’s freely accessible public spaces, hosting urban, collective activities. This will require the symbolic and actual lifting of fenced boundaries that is, transforming the deterrent, linear limit into an interspace that triggers the mutual penetration of the city’s past and present. My research draws from relevant, contemporary literature that regards monuments neither as well-guarded works of art, nor as remote sceneries or tourist-growth indicators, in order to propose a critical reappraisal of problematic concepts such as the re-emergence of the monuments’ political and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: public realm, visual rhetorics, antiquities, limit, democracy.

Introduction

This paper investigates the shifting character of antiquities as they have gradually given up their traditional role as symbolic arks of memory and converted to tourist attractions. It puts forward a coherent argument for an alternative approach to urban monuments and archaeological sites, as part of a viable model of sustainable tourist growth for mature, conceptually congested historic destinations; an approach that entails the reclamation of these sites by the city for the benefit of both visitors and its citizens. The underlying argument is that today’s fenced off tourist sites with paid entrance should become tomorrow’s freely accessible public spaces, hosting urban, collective activities. This will require the symbolic and actual lifting of fenced boundaries that is, transforming the deterrent, linear limit into a space that triggers the mutual penetration of the city’s past and present.

Urban monuments and excavation sites act as condensers, storing multilayered social transcriptions or diverse ideological constructs and refuelling people’s, nations’ and cities’ collective consciousness. Presently, the symbolic function and decisive educational and aesthetic role that antiquities played in the daily life of modern Greece, is being undermined by the constant pressing for greater commercial, touristic exploitation. The ontology of urban archaeological sites has been modified to adapt to the sightseeing-oriented function of other tourist attractions of the city, negating their historic role as active public spaces of democracy. This accelerates their spatial degradation: servicing tourism consumption rather than forging a collective identity and giving shape to the sense of continuity and belonging. As the rhetoric of power finds in the managing of monuments an ideal spatial representation, the Greek State, from the 19th century onward, invests in the constant restocking of the national narrative by promoting a distorted historic and cultural continuity with the past.

My research draws from relevant, contemporary literature that regards monuments neither as well-guarded works of art, nor as remote sceneries or tourist-growth indicators, in order to propose a critical

reappraisal of problematic concepts such as the re-emergence of the monuments' political and cultural dimensions. These aspects set the theoretical background against which the reputedly most successful Greek example of a centrally-planned programme on regional tourism development is examined. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Greek Tourism Organisation (G.T.O.) embarked on an ambitious project to furnish the country with modern tourist facilities, which would set the standard for future private initiative. These projects would develop in a complex grid, along major motorways, towards natural resorts and, on or near archaeological sites.

This model of intense exploitation of archaeological sites, particularly those within city limits, deprived these potentially rich and active urban, public spaces of their invaluable social function; offering little or no symbolic value to local communities and upsetting the uninterrupted age-old relation between the citizens and their immediate natural or manmade surroundings. As these policies remain unchallenged even today, it is important that a new, sustainable agenda for mass tourism is discussed with this in mind: cultural heritage embroidered on the rich fabric of local everyday life could pose a viable alternative to cultural consumption.

Exercising Democracy

Last year's mass demonstrations in Madrid's Puerta del Sol square fired up similar protests by thousands of concerned citizens in Greece, who attempted to reclaim Syntagma square, as a place for exercising democracy. The square's public space was transformed into a podium for the informal declaration of public disapproval by thousands of "*indignados*" who raised their voice against multiple forms of power and demonstrated their determination to achieve real democracy. These global phenomena provide the backbone for this paper's main argument, which focuses on the redefinition of the main features that formulate public space's identity, by analysing the interrelation between power, citizens and monuments. More specifically, the paper proposes a way to expand current freely accessible public space, not by extending existing, or drawing new, physical boundaries, but by developing new spatial properties as well as alternative ways of managing urban monuments and archaeological sites, so that the city of the future can benefit from a wider understanding of the notion of public space. In my case studies, urban monuments are considered as spatial tokens of cultural heritage that could potentially generate public spaces within city limits. The full exposition of my argument will challenge well-established official policies that governments diachronically implement, by considering monuments and archaeological sites as controlled, protected environments, in order to repackage the past according to different ephemeral needs and convert these spatial manifestations of history into commercially exploitable tourist magnets.

The philosophical framework that provides the theoretical context for my argument that is, the proposed widening of the notion of public space, presupposes the expansion of the concept of *public sphere* (*Öffentlichkeit*) as defined by J. Habermas (1991, p.3). The term widening is introduced here to suggest the qualitative expansion of the city's *public realm* (streets, squares, parks, water fronts, public buildings), that is *public sphere's* spatial transcriptions, by reclaiming the public space of archaeological sites, not merely as additional surfaces –a few extra square meters at the disposal of the local government– but by introducing new operating rules, a novel managerial platform, that will transpose these spaces from the periphery of city-life to the very epicentre of the contemporary city. The necessary and sufficient preconditions for achieving this are granting free access to every citizen who wishes to spend there some quality time for inspiration and introspection and removing the fencing that separates the lived public spaces of the city from their protected counterparts. The concepts of *public sphere* and *public realm*, in their political dimension, establish a dialectical negotiation between structures of power and the citizen, thus transforming every public space of the city in a potential, dynamic field of mutual repossession and continuous antagonism between them. According to Habermas, the concept of the *public sphere*, which descends from ancient Greek Agora, reappears in the 18th century, as a reaction to the *representative publicness* (Habermas, 1991, p.7) of the people in power. However, the gradual rebuilding of the *public*

sphere at the dawn of modernity, did not succeed in ridding with the rich armoury of central power's political manoeuvring and theatrical representation, such as the use of symbolic works of art, public ceremonies, ceremonial urban design and, of course, public architecture, city planning and monuments' design. Even though, for the last three centuries, the European *public sphere* was most of the time dominated by power's representation, in the 19th century it appears that democratic thought and action are finally being expressed in the public domain, by means of publicising people's demands, demonstrating people's needs and openly discussing public opinion. The inherent tension between representative power and the democratization of public space is understood here as the aestheticisation (*ésthétisation*) of public life, with direct reference to Walter Benjamin's work. According to him, the predominance of power-oriented representation in public life inevitably leads to war (Benjamin, 1935, p.15).

Nowadays, we witness global economic and social transformations that redefine our perception of war; it has been transposed to our cities in the form of everyday urban violence. The urban landscape gradually transforms into a battlefield, an altogether too familiar phenomenon that frequently distresses the citizens of Athens for the past few decades. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that any action towards restricting, limiting, policing or surveying the public character of urban spaces produces an equally violent reaction, permanent or recurring, that leads to the illegal occupation of the public space of the city, either by criminal elements with unlawful behaviour (drugs, prostitution, street sellers, etc.) or by illegal commercial activity (advertising boards, excessive chairs and tables from cafés, etc.). Contemporary grassroots initiatives by concerned urban dwellers who wish to improve the quality and regain control over portions of informally and illegally occupied public space, have met with moderate success, as Greek citizens have not been educated in participating in the decision making processes of their local communities, as well as in producing and managing their local public spaces. Urban public spaces and the processes involved in producing them, specifically the reformation and reintegration of archaeological sites in the fabric of the city, encompass a significant political dimension because they function not only as space-containers of diverging symbolic representations of power but also as a podium for citizens to exercise the dialectical process of democracy. The extent to which the produced space contributes to tourism growth is a useful and desired by-product of this age-old process, where citizens participate in the formulation of their own, immediate environment.

This paper proposes a novel managerial model for the regulation of urban archaeological sites, founded on a theoretical construct that attempts osmosis between Architecture and Rhetoric Art, as an operating analogy between two dominant, diachronic mediums of representation. According to Aristotle, there exists a permanent, two-way dialectical process of data exchange, so as to achieve a compromise between major or minor dualities. Aristotle uses the term "*metavivazein*" [101a30], in order to describe this process. In our case, the aforementioned dualities concern potential tension between the state and its citizens, the nation and its history, us and the others, public space and public life, etc. For example, the public space that is generated by a historical monument, transfers to the public different quality data from what emanates from a new, recently designed public space, with a yet unshaped or unclear identity. Plato, in his dialogue *Gorgias* [466d], defines the rhetorical act as a medium of the city's ability to represent itself and a negotiating tool available both to central power and the people. Furthering the analogy, Architecture, as the medium for producing public spaces and public buildings, acts also as a tool for reconciling diverging and often conflicting priorities between power, space and the people. The expected result from this kind of reconciliation is the establishment of a common illusion (Schildgen, 1977, p.93), which expresses a constructed perception about the past, the present and the future of our public sphere. In other words, monuments, as material proof of the past, have functioned as containers of a palimpsest of transcriptions during their long lives, as well as bearers of diverse ideological constructs (Althusser, 1999, pp.99-102) that inscribe and form society's dominant way of seeing.

It is common ground that, when a state goes through a phase of modernization and reorganization, power holders invest in traditional, national values, in order to redefine them and to secure people's cooperation

and participation in a common, but rather vague, goal towards progress and prosperity. These ideological constructs, usually based on history, culture, and local identity, incorporate all previous *regimes of truth*. Foucault's *regimes of truth*, describes formations of truth that correspond to a certain time in history and a particular power structure in society. In order to materialize different strata of truth, governments always invested in Architecture and City Planning. After all, according to Althusser, "*ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship between individuals and the real conditions of their existence*", but also "*ideology has a material existence*" (Althusser, 1976, p.101). In accordance to this, Greek architectural ruins continue to nourish national, collective expectations, as yet another ideological transcription on the very physical structure of the building themselves. However, there is a twofold consequence in this. On the one hand, ruins have created a common denominator which, in difficult and trying times such as the ones many defaulting economies face today, brought and continue to bring people together under the very daily struggle for a better future. As a matter of fact, this ceaseless construction and subsequent reconstruction of national identities occasionally helps strengthening a sense of belonging or partaking in a shared culture. On the other hand, national ideological constructs mainly create illusions about the past, the present and the future of a nation, which, most of the time, aim to maintain the current status quo, and act as formidable deterrents towards challenges of their *regime of truth*.

The Limit – Definition and Transformation

Monuments and antiquities in Greece, with their age-old presence in people's life and history, currently suffer from a gradual diminishing of their symbolic, aesthetic and educational role in people's daily life. More specifically, there is a metaphorical decrease of their semantic importance, while at the same time there is a disproportionate growth of their commercial and touristic value. Over the past few decades, a fierce process of assimilation has taken place, where archaeological sites and all other worth-visiting tourist attractions (places of natural beauty, modern constructions, amusement parks, etc.) were treated without differentiation. At the same time, architectural monuments' important role in the city's democratic life and their crucial function as material evidence of the, so called, continuity with the past has been undermined. Squares, temples, public buildings, historic sites, monuments, for centuries have been identified as social condensers of people's public expression. From the 1950s onwards, these condensers have almost exclusively been exploited as touristic destinations for recreation and amusement, with even their educational value being consistently underplayed.

Literature acknowledges that many aspects of contemporary public life in Greece are deeply rooted in the dogmas and beliefs of mid 19th century Romanticism, when the New Greek State was reborn from the ashes of four hundred years of Ottoman occupation. Consequently, contemporary Greeks' attitude towards their nation's historic monuments holds from the out-dated practices that the first Greek governments implemented, in order to manage and safeguard their valuable ancient architectural heritage. These practices remain in use today, more or less without significant changes in their philosophy. Since 1829, the newly baptised State has prioritised the protection and preservation of the antiquities. The first among a series of pieces of legislation that aimed to protect the antiquities against further deterioration and smuggling entailed the extensive installation of protective fencing (Bastea, 2008, p.250). This was followed by the gradual removal of all structures that did not date from the archaic, classical, Hellenistic or roman era, Ottoman annexes to classical ruins in particular, in an effort to restore the monument to its former splendour, as 'clean' and close to the original as possible (Bastea, 2008, p.193). This practice shows little or no consideration for the traces of other civilizations, which left their unmistakable mark on the Greek landscape, both rural and urban. Fences all over the country, in order to secure breathing space for the monument or the excavation site, were installed according to more or less random decisions, dictated either by natural or man-made obstacles (rivers, coastlines, road networks underground pipes, etc.), or from the State's finances and their ability to support and carry out a usually expensive programme of compulsory expropriations of private land. Whatever the cause, the installed, protective fence marks the gradual isolation of the monument from the everyday life of the city, negating a certain

symbiotic existence, an unmediated, more direct and, therefore, genuine relationship – fearful and respectful – that has been formulated over the centuries between the citizens and the material tokens of their past. However, in the early years of the New Greek State, fencing off the monument with a guarded perimeter and emptying its limited space from any informal daily activity, also helped with the strengthening of its sacred properties as a respected testimony to a glorious past (Hamilakis, 2007, p.290). This paper attempts to shed light to the relationship between the city and its monuments, by activating the transformation of the defined, linear limit of the fencing into a surface, where the penetration of the city's present into its own past takes place and vice versa. Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*, with reference to Jean Hyppolite and Henri Michaux, writes that a framed, limited space creates alienation, hostility and pain (1994, p.212): “*Outside and inside...are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful in both sides*” (1994, p.218).

Early on, Greek governments invested in the symbolic sanctity of the ruins, in their effort to restore a connection between Modern Greece and the ancient world. This had a twofold meaning: it justified several questionable policies, while at the same time it aimed to motivate the wretched people of Greece to work collectively towards a brighter future. Most importantly, it aimed to establish a touristic conscience in order to attract foreign travellers and visitors and gain international recognition. The governments felt obliged to fulfil and facilitate in any way possible foreign visitors' sacred pilgrimage to the cradle of Western civilization and materialize their neoclassic, romantic illusions about the country and its people. After all, Europe had already shown her keen interest in the ancient world, even before the national liberation war against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. Since Greece was looking forward to become part of the admired West that stood for progress and civilisation, she adopted similar collective illusions. However, in spite of the genuine pride that every nation should have for its past and its history, making repetitive references to a glorious past, by almost all Greek governments, corresponds to a narcissistic propaganda, a political game of correlations, subconscious parallelisms and rhetorical exploitation of a present that is presented as important as the past (Martinides, 2000, p.243). In other words, the city should be constantly reminded, through its ruins, the values that she ought to serve (Miles, 2007). These values were conveyed through control and fencing policies, the monument's sterilization from alien constructions and unofficial activities, and, most importantly, the total surrender to the demands of tourist growth.

In general, the Greek state managed the ancient ruins in very specific ways: as magnets for foreign visitors, as the driving force of the country's economic recovery during periods of financial stagnation, such as the one we are experiencing now, as an ideal scenery for the international film industry, or as proof of Greek civilization's uninterrupted continuity, neglecting to recognize that the management and use of the nation's cultural heritage should be an integral part of local, everyday life. Furthermore, the policy of putting up fences is very much still activate today without further reassessment. In the name of economic development, political, commercial and scientific management of archaeological sites rest on the aforementioned dominant models of commercial exploitation. Archaeological sites are constantly restored, conserved, rehabilitated, repaired and in other words reconstructed, in order to remain the same through time. We should probably reconsider this attitude towards our past and make sincere efforts to revitalize, re-establish or regenerate the archaeological sites by incorporating them in the city's everyday bustling activity. When we will stop approaching our cultural heritage nostalgically, then the ancient archaeological remnants will cease to be sacred relics. John Berger, who proposes alternative *Ways of Seeing*, asks us “...to whom the meaning of the art of the past properly belong?” To those individual participants of a shared culture, “...who can apply it to their own lives, or to a cultural hierarchy or relic specialists”, or even the State itself? Crisscrossing between Benjamin and Berger, one might say that the mechanical reproduction of our cultural heritage, through its commercialisation as a tourism attraction, might traumatise not only our personal experience with the ruins “...but also our essential historical

experience to the past: that is to say the experience of seeking to give meaning to our lives, of trying to understand the history of which we can become the active agents” (Berger, 2002, pp.127-129).

Touristic Urbanism around the Acropolis of Athens

During the period between 1952 and 1967, Greek governments invested both in the past and the future in order to accomplish economic development along with society's modernization. The medium for this was the development of the tourism industry. Greece's tourism programme was a clear political choice, invested with great expectations for the importation of foreign currency. This programme was moulded along two major axes: the transformation of plots with ruins into scientifically excavated archaeological sites accessible to visitors, and the modernization of the country's hotel infrastructure by constructing a network of new, modern, state-run tourist hotels all over the country and an international luxurious hotel in Athens. Over a short period of time, the country witnessed an unprecedented increase in construction activity. More than 100 new hotels, motels, tourist pavilions, organized beaches and holiday camps were built under state supervision, while archaeological excavations and hurried restorations of monuments and archaeological sites monopolised the interest of local and international press. In 1951, Greek Tourism Organization (G.T.O.) was recomposed and inaugurated its tourism programme with the financial aid of the Marshall Plan's local American Mission. The programme's main directive was to engage as many regions of the country as possible by declaring them as Touristic Areas and to develop them by constructing modern touristic infrastructure for accommodation, hospitality, information and leisure. Under Greek law, being declared as Touristic Area came with certain privileges, in addition to the aforementioned infrastructure, such as publicity, advertisement, open festivals, etc. During the first years, there was great antagonism between competing regions for a place in the programme. Naturally, locations that were closer to major traffic corridors, significant archaeological sites, places of natural beauty and near Athens had better chance of securing a place in the programme. Furthermore, the state-run Xenia hotel chain, a network of popular hotels designed by prominent Greek architects under the supervision of the State, provided accommodation of high standards in a clean, warm and modern environment.

In the 1950's, the area around the Acropolis underwent a major redevelopment that constitutes the most successful paradigm of State's rhetorical management of antiquity in Greece's post-war and post-civil war reconstruction period. Having Parthenon as their symbolic and physical centre, three major projects were executed around the same time, which, despite their apparent differences as far as their origin, design and concept are concerned, shared common properties and formed similar representations of the same visual rhetoric on behalf of the government. The urgent need for a modern State led to the reinvention of Greece through projects extremely diverse in their philosophy and orientation, whose major common denominators were tourism development and the Acropolis of Athens. These projects were nurtured in the heated atmosphere of the Cold War, which labelled Greece's prosperity and modernization as barriers against Communist expansion. The first project was the landscaping of the surrounding area of the Acropolis and Philopappos hills (1951-1957) by architect and Professor Dimitris Pikionis. The second was the excavation and restoration of Ancient Agora, as well as the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos by the American School of Classical Studies (1951-1956). Finally, the third project was the construction of the Athens Hilton Hotel (1958-1963) by architects P. Vassiliades, M. Vourekas, S. Staikos, situated at a carefully selected site that offered magnificent, unobstructed views of the Parthenon.

This paper wishes to argue that all three projects represent different sides of the same political argument. This commonly shared rhetorical argument answers to the pressing demand for a constant repackaging of the national narrative, carefully harmonized with either foreign visitor's approach to antiquity as an idealized place where classicism was born, or foreign capital's interest in investing in tourism infrastructure. This realisation helps us draw an analogy between 1950s Greece and 19th century Greece, when the invasion/penetration of Western European viewpoints on antiquity defined our own ways of

looking at our past. In the 1950's and 1960's, the management of our cultural heritage, once more, is based on imported ways of seeing antiquity. There was a romantic trend, according to which potential foreign visitors to Greece literally expected to arrive to a virgin, unexplored, well-preserved 19th century landscape, where they could live their "*grand tour*" illusion and have their tailor-made pilgrimage to the cradle of democracy. Less naïve, but strong supporter of 'pilgrimage theories', Yale Professor and highly regarded architectural historian Vincent Scully, published in 1963 a polemic article, opposing the construction of the Athens Hilton, characterizing the whole project as an "*act of shame and vandalism*" (Scully, 1963, pp.101-102). His article in "*Architectural Forum*" magazine begins with a full-page photograph of the Athens Hilton in the distance, flanked by Parthenon's colonnade in the foreground. Anne Jane Wharton attributes Scully's anger to "...the failure of modern Athenians in their priestly obligation to maintain their ancient and sacred panorama" (Wharton, 2001, p.67). It is clear that a major part of the government's strategies for tourism development concerned an international audience as much as, or even more, the local community.

Pikionis' design for the landscaping around the Acropolis of Athens was considered to be his *magnum opus* and an exemplary type of landscape design that manages to coexist with the ruins from antiquity. He was praised for succeeding in expressing the *genius loci* of the site, for ingeniously using natural, local materials, for employing high-quality craftsmanship and, for being spiritual and rational at the same time. Still, the project was primarily designed to complete, expand and embellish the ideal scenery of the Acropolis, in order to welcome more contended tourists and meet their high expectations. At the same time, a different form of constructed landscaping was taking place on the other side of the Acropolis by American archaeologists, funded by the Rockefeller Institute in the U.S.A. Since the Marshall Plan, post-war Greek governments had carefully invested in Greek-American cooperation. American businessmen canvassed countries that would welcome their investments and American archaeologists imported radical approaches to the current debate about reconstructing antiquities. Today, building a replica of the Stoa of Attalos would be a controversial project since, despite its scientific accuracy, it reproduces an ancient building from scratch, very much in the manner of an archaeological theme-park, a tactic no longer encouraged by international restoration and preservation treaties. In the 1950's, apart from the field of excavating and restoring antiquities, the American way of seeing prevailed also in modern construction activity, thus creating an interesting polemic between Regionalism and Internationalism. Gropius' American Embassy in Athens and Conrad Hilton's international hotels, prompted many Greek intellectuals to express their discomfort with modern Greek architecture' lack of autonomy with respect to its submission to a potential American architectural colonization. Whatever the original motivation might have been, it was within the Greek government's purview to provide all possible amenities and services to Greek and particularly American investors, in order to ensure that projects such as the new international Athens Hilton Hotel, erected at a privileged lot in the centre of Athens, would meet with great success. The Athens Hilton has been described as one of the most successful applications of Greek classicist modernism, in spite of the original, negative international and local reception.

Nowadays, we witness the gradual formulation of a conflict of interest between short-sighted applied policies about urban archaeological sites and the city's urgent need for open, freely accessible public spaces. Today, the archaeological site of the Ancient Agora operates on the basis of an entrance admission fee, strict opening hours and a well-guarded, fenced off perimeter, while Philopappos hill, which is freely accessible, is constantly under pressure by the Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, to be submitted to this kind of "painful protection". Recently, a difference of opinions emerged between the Ephorate and local city-dwellers and, as a result, the fencing has been avoided for now. The former suggested furthering the programme of "rehabilitation and presentation" of the green areas of Philopappos and Pnyka hills opposite the Acropolis, in order to furnish the city of Athens with yet another fenced off archaeological site, such as it was previously done with Ancient Agora and the Temple of Zeus. The aforementioned urban landscapes maintained for decades a double identity: that of a vital green area and an archaeological site. Extensive fencing policies facilitated their total transmutation

into a tourist park around the Acropolis and a considerable source of Government revenue. At the same time, the congested city centre suffocates by traffic, protests, erratic commercial activities, abandonment and aggressive or criminal behaviour.

Although tourists keep coming, especially in the high season from April to September, to Athens' city centre, where all major tourist attractions are located, local city dwellers are gradually pushed away from it, since the city centre is no longer considered a suitable place for families. This all too familiar "*doughnut effect*" created a vacuum that generated new gravitational forces, mobilising different groups of urban population. Economic migrants became the new inhabitants of Athens' historical centre. Although emigrants, having to deal with their own real-life dramas, are the new neighbours of Athens' antiquities, still they are not given a chance to become sentimentally attached to the fenced antiquities of their new country and, most importantly, they do not consider archaeological sites as freely accessible public spaces. The utopian idea of a potentially expanded *public sphere*, where Greeks would stop approaching ancient ruins with nostalgia as sacred relics of a glorified past, emigrants would feel welcome to partake in the lived and imagined history of their new country and foreign visitors would benefit from their peaceful and creative coexistence, could be realised in the crucial urban spaces of freely accessible, totally integrated in the life of the city, archaeological sites and parks. Alas, this utopia is constantly undermined, postponed and, eventually, negated, as long as our relationship with the past is not democratically reconsidered. State authorities insist on promoting the scientific, historic, and aesthetic values of the monuments and neglect the social, educational, and, why not, entertaining and psychological aspects of the matter. Prominent Greek archaeologist C. Doumas (2009, p.16) points out that only the worst part of the urban, organized archaeological sites' social value has been foregrounded so far, that is to say their financial exploitation, while their unexplored psychological and educational virtues, which could inspire respect and maybe discourage potential acts of vandalism, is constantly neglected. He is in favour of an alternative way of managing antiquities that includes, but is not limited to, free and round-the-clock access, so that monuments may become part of everyday city life, a place for introspection, where one may walk, paint, fall in love, be miserable or happy, find hope and celebrate, in other words, live. After all, there is a strong possibility that a fully incorporated monument into city life could be the answer to the protection and conservation of antiquities through time.

Concluding Remarks

Urban and architectural touristic projects from the 1950's were, at the time, paradigmatic expressions of the official rhetoric of the State. However, up until today, the public spaces they produced refuse to evolve with the rest of the city, thus remaining formal, controlled, inflexible, and trapped in the out-dated canon that generated them. It is worth mentioning that, for the last few decades, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has set out to materialise the major project of the alleged "*unification*" of the archaeological sites of Athens. The aim of the project, quoting from the Ministry's webpage, is to create "*a 4km long archaeological park, running across the centre of the city*" that would produce "*a cultural, recreative (sic) and instructive centre, unique in all the world (sic) and very much needed by Athens to emerge (sic) from her present condition*". Even amidst this period of global economic crisis, the Ministry carries on with the same vain, maximalistic rhetorics of the past that talk about uniqueness and ingenuity. One wonders if this park is designed on the basis of a linear patchwork of fragmented, smaller, fenced sites and what kind of entrance fee could cover the prospective cost of this ambitious project. Paraphrasing the Futurist slogan "*fiat ars – pereat mundus*", one may say in relation to Greece's planning "let Tourism be created – let Culture perish".

Nowadays, several countries in debt, with frail economies but high prospects, invest heavily in the rapid growth of their Tourism sector. One can only hope that the current apotheosis of Tourism will be embedded in a wholly different mentality, as far as tourism growth and its coexistence with cultural heritage and contemporary everyday life are concerned. This paper's proposal for a genuinely novel,

symbiotic relation with the past calls for a totally different, non-nostalgic understanding of urban monuments, from all people alike, Greeks and non-Greeks, local dwellers and far away travellers. Managing creatively their dialectic, symbolic, educative and aesthetic palimpsest of dynamic premises could provide sufficient answers to many contemporary urban phenomena that urgently press for permanent solutions. The shifting character of urban monuments, moving from exclusively touristic exploitable areas to freely accessible public spaces, may signpost the road towards an analogous shifting of people's mentality from being distant spectators to becoming responsible citizens, who support their historic environment by securing the necessary preconditions for enabling daily, unforced and unmediated encounters with their past. Freely accessible archaeological sites and monuments that embrace the diversity and wealth of everyday life could contribute to the expansion and enrichment of urban public space and would most definitely further the democratization of our society's *public sphere*.

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